

ROGER JAMES EVAN BROWN (1931-1980)

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Dr. Roger J.E. Brown died in Ottawa, ON, on November 4, 1980 after a long and valiant battle with cancer. He was widely known as an authority on the distribution of permafrost in Canada.

Roger was born in Toronto, ON, on January 17, 1931 and received his BA (1952) and MA (1954) degrees in geography from the University of Toronto. He received his PhD from Clark University, in Massachusetts, in 1961 after doing his course work there and his research at the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, England. His thesis was "Permafrost in Canada – Its Effect on Developments in an Area of Marginal Human Activity".

He joined the Division of Building Research, National Research Council of Canada, in June 1953 and began his studies on the distribution of permafrost in Canada, and the climatic and terrain factors that affect the formation and stability of permafrost. Between his educational leaves, he was a member of the site survey team that led to the selection of the town site for Inuvik, NWT, and participated in permafrost studies for the new town of Thompson, MB. After obtaining his PhD, Roger continued his extensive research on the distribution of permafrost, discontinuous permafrost and alpine permafrost throughout Canada.

Roger was the author or co-author of more than 45 scientific and technical papers and various editions of the Permafrost Map of Canada, first published in 1967. He was an active member of many national and international committees and organizations. He was perhaps best known as the Research Advisor and Secretary to the Permafrost Subcommittee of the National Research Council's, Associate Committee on Geotechnical Research. In this role he was the guiding force in organizing the first three Canadian permafrost conferences, and the first two international permafrost conferences. Due in no small part to his efforts, strong links were forged with permafrost workers throughout the world, notably, in the USA, USSR, People's Republic of China, France, Poland, England, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland.

He was a Fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America and the Canadian Geotechnical Society. In 1980, five weeks before his death, he received in person, the CGS's R.F. Legget

Award [now medal]. This was a fitting tribute recognizing the significant achievements and contributions he had made to Canada in the geotechnical field. [In 1986, the CGS established the Roger J.E. Brown Award, an award of its Cold Regions Geotechnology Division, in his honour.]

Permafrost underlies about one-half of Canada and Roger was keenly aware of its importance to the efficient and effective development, with due regard for environmental concerns, of our northern areas. He, therefore, was very active in furthering the scientific and public knowledge of permafrost in Canada.